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Daily Highlights

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FRIDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Security Council expresses concern at reports of ethnic cleansing by Bosnian Serbs in Bijeljina area; demands immediate end to practice wherever it occurs; calls for early release of all detainees.

+ UNPROFOR condemns Bosnian Serb attack on French helicopter flying over Sarajevo; Co-Chairmen of International Conference on Former Yugoslavia to visit Belgrade and Zagreb for talks next week.

+ After two days of talks in Geneva, Georgian and Abkhaz parties sign Statement on Voluntary Return of Refugees and Displaced Persons.

+ International Conference on Population and Development to begin in Cairo on Monday; seeks strategy for stabilizing population growth and achieving sustainable development.

+ Preparatory Committee for 1995 World Social Summit to hold inter-sessional meeting to finalize draft programme of action.

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The Security Council today said it was deeply disturbed by reports of ethnic cleansing by the Bosnian Serb party in the Bijeljina area. In a statement read out by its President, Juan Antonio Yañez-Barnuevo (Spain), the Council condemned the practice wherever it occurred and by whomever it was committed, and demanded that it cease immediately.

The Council condemned all violations of international humanitarian law in the Bosnian conflict, stressing that those who committed them were personally responsible. It called for full implementation of provisions on the release of detainees contained in the Agreement concluded in Geneva on 8 June. It further called for the early release of all detainees, and for International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) delegates to be granted access to detainees in Lopare and other parts of the Bijeljina area.

The Council reaffirmed the importance of freedom of movement for the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina.

(more)

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It noted with dismay that the Bosnian Serb party had not allowed the Secretary-General's Special Representative to visit Banja Luka, Bijeljina and other areas of concern, and strongly urged it to permit him and UNPROFOR such access. The Council also expressed concern about continuing restrictions on access to Sarajevo, particularly the Bosnian Serb closure of the routes across the airport opened following the 17 March Agreement.

In a related development, President Yañez-Barnuevo told correspondents that the Council was concerned at reports of continuing military activity and signs of a military build-up in various parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina. He said the Council would follow that situation very closely.

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Bosnian Serb forces yesterday fired rocket-propelled grenades and heavy machine-guns at a United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) helicopter flying over Sarajevo. The French helicopter managed to land without any casualties, despite having been hit six times. UNPROFOR strongly condemned the attack, pointing out that the Bosnian Serbs had been notified in advance of the scheduled flight. It also decided to suspend helicopter flights over Sarajevo.

Meanwhile, the Co-Chairmen of the International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia, Thorvald Stoltenberg and Lord Owen, were continuing their mediation efforts. They will travel to Belgrade on Sunday, and to Zagreb on Tuesday, for talks with the parties.

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After two days of talks in Geneva, the Georgian and Abkhaz parties have signed a Statement Regarding the Voluntary Return of Refugees and Displaced Persons. The document was also signed by Special Envoy Edouard Brunner, who chaired the talks, and by representatives of the Russian Federation, the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

The parties agreed to make every effort to complete all necessary documentation for the return of refugees and displaced persons so that the process could begin as soon as possible. Returnees will be informed through the UNHCR that they must comply with laws which are in force in Abkhazia, and which do not contradict the right of return in accordance with the Quadripartite Agreement and universally recognized human rights. The parties noted the UNHCR's readiness to assist spontaneous returnees, as well as organized returnees, once the process has begun.

Reaffirming their commitment to previous agreements, the parties also agreed to attend the next meeting of the Quadripartite Commission in Sochi on 6 September.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali will open the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo on Monday. The Conference will aim to agree on a strategy for stabilizing world population growth and achieving sustainable development. It is expected to endorse a draft 20-year programme of action which says that those aims are mutually reinforcing, and which stresses the need to empower women and to guarantee choice in family planning.

The 16-chapter, 113-page draft, which was produced by a Preparatory Committee, reflects agreement on 85 per cent of the wording to be adopted. The are three main outstanding issues. The first concerns a set of 20-year goals: universal completion of primary education, especially for girls; reduction in infant and maternal mortality; and universal access to family planning information and services. The second issue concerns the estimates of financial resources required to provide reproductive health services; to operate programmes for the prevention of sexually transmitted diseases; and to meet population data, policy and research needs. The third outstanding issue deals with the definition of such terms as "reproductive rights", "fertility regulation" and "family planning".

A five-day general debate is expected to focus on experiences in population and development strategies and programmes. It will be held concurrently with meetings of the Main Committee charged with resolving outstanding issues and finalizing the draft programme of action, which will then be submitted to the plenary for adoption. Almost 150 countries are expected to participate in the Conference, and some 1,000 non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have been accredited.

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The Preparatory Committee for the 1995 World Summit for Social Development decided yesterday to hold an inter-sessional meeting to continue work on the draft programme of action for the Summit. Committee Chairman Juan Samovia (Chile) said the meeting might take place in conjunction with meetings of the General Assembly's Third Committee (Social, Humanitarian and Cultural), so that maximum participation could be achieved with full conference services.

The inter-sessional meeting will address the right to migrate, structural adjustment, official development assistance, social security and the family. It will also consider such issues as poverty reduction, sustainable development, broadening the understanding of work, and the "20/20" initiative. That initiative would have the Governments of developing countries and donors devote 20 per cent of their budgets and official development assistance, respectively, to social spending. Numerous amendments have made the draft programme longer, although the five-chapter structure will be retained.

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